

109TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. RES. 977

Reinforcing the Federal Government's Federal trust relationship and commitment to working with American Indian Nations to empower, promote, and support the educational development of American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 28, 2006

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota (for herself, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HOLT, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. BOREN, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. KIND, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. MOORE of Kansas, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Ms. HERSETH, Mr. FILNER, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, and Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committee on Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## RESOLUTION

Reinforcing the Federal Government's Federal trust relationship and commitment to working with American Indian Nations to empower, promote, and support the educational development of American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth.

Whereas the Federal Government has established educational priorities to ensure that all American children are adequately prepared and educated to be productive, healthy citizens;

Whereas the Federal Head Start program was created to ensure access to quality early education, to promote school readiness, and to help prepare low-income children for success in kindergarten and beyond, and low-income American Indian and Alaska Native children are among the more than half of all eligible children who are not receiving services because Head Start is consistently underfunded;

Whereas the Federal Government seeks to promote the development of all children and has enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB Act) to ensure that all children receive a quality education and that academic progress among all children is measured;

Whereas the President of the United States signed an Indian Education Executive Order on April 30, 2004, that reaffirms the right of every American Indian and Alaska Native child to the highest quality education that meets their unique cultural and academic needs;

Whereas the Federal Government has demonstrated its commitment to preserving and strengthening American Indian culture and language by enacting the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Indian Education Act (1972), the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975), and the Native American Languages Act (1990);

Whereas there are more than 815,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children that are striving to be healthy and productive citizens;

Whereas the high school graduation rate for American Indian and Alaska Native youth is 54 percent and the college readiness rate is 14 percent, and those rates are signifi-

cantly less than the rates of white students, which are 72 and 37 percent, respectively;

Whereas the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which receives Federal appropriations for Indian Education, including school construction, to fulfill treaty obligations has been consistently underfunded and unable to meet the educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth;

Whereas one-third of the 184 Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools are in poor condition and in need of repair, and most of the facilities and structures of these schools have exceeded their “useful life”, as described in the NCLB Act;

Whereas the Federal Government recognizes that American Indian and Alaska Native people possess a rich culture and history that has significantly contributed to development of the United States and therefore must be preserved for all Americans;

Whereas the NCLB Act recognizes the importance of American Indian and Alaska Native culture and language through title VII, and research has shown that language and culture-based programs increase student performance and success and contribute significantly to the success of American Indian and Alaska Native students and to the betterment of all American children;

Whereas Tribal colleges and universities are designed to promote the higher education of American Indian and Alaska Native students and the Federal Government supports the education priorities of Tribal Nations through Federal TRIO programs, Pell Grants, and other Federal student financial aid, and yet these critical programs de-

signed to enhance college readiness and access have been severely underfunded by the Federal Government;

Whereas after-school activities serve as a significant enrichment mechanism for American Indian and Alaska Native students, because such activities allow youth opportunities to interact with peers, actively engage with elders, and participate in cultural activities, and research indicates that after-school activities are important in fostering positive youth development and promoting a positive cultural identity;

Whereas the economic status of American Indian and Alaska Native communities is significantly lower than the general United States population, as demonstrated by the fact that 31 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native children were living in poverty in 2004;

Whereas research indicates that poverty is not only indicative of economic hardship, but also of other outcomes that negatively affect educational development and attainment; and

Whereas educational attainment for American Indian and Alaska Native people is positively linked with an improved housing environment, economic and food security, and an overall healthy lifestyle, and education serves as a mechanism to promote and strengthen families and communities: Now, therefore, be it

- 1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2               (1) affirms the Federal Government’s special
- 3       legal and political relationship with American Indian
- 4       and Alaska Native people by recognizing the sov-
- 5       ereignty of Tribal Nations;

1           (2) calls upon the Federal Government, includ-  
2           ing the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Depart-  
3           ment of Education, to recognize and fulfill its trust  
4           responsibilities and consultation obligations to Amer-  
5           ican Indian and Alaska Native people and commu-  
6           nities;

7           (3) acknowledges that the past Federal policies  
8           of the forced removal of children from reservations  
9           to boarding schools have negatively impacted Amer-  
10          ican Indian and Alaska Native families, commu-  
11          nities, and youth;

12          (4) urges the Federal Government to promote  
13          success and eliminate disparities among American  
14          Indian and Alaska Native children and youth during  
15          consideration of the reauthorizations of Head Start  
16          and the No Child Left Behind Act, and through the  
17          Federal appropriations process;

18          (5) urges the Federal Government to recognize,  
19          promote, and work towards strengthening the edu-  
20          cational needs of American Indian and Alaska Na-  
21          tive youth and families;

22          (6) reinforces the educational commitment to  
23          promote the best interests of American Indian and  
24          Alaska Native children by reinforcing native cultural  
25          and language development which strengthens, pre-

1 serves, and promotes cultural identity, and recog-  
2 nizes that it is imperative that the Federal Govern-  
3 ment sharpen its focus and commitment to title VII  
4 of the No Child Left Behind Act consistent with the  
5 desires of American Indian and Alaska Native peo-  
6 ple; and

7 (7) recognizes that education is significantly  
8 linked to overall quality of life and therefore must be  
9 prioritized and organized to meet the unique and  
10 specialized needs of American Indian and Alaska  
11 Native students.

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